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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Farm Security Administration

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Penderlea Farms Project

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OFFICIAL NAME: Penderlea Farms Project.

LOCATION: In Pender County, North Carolina, 8 miles North of Burgaw.

HISTORY: Begun by the Subsistence Homesteads, Department of Interior, official approval December 20, 1933. Taken over by the Farm Security Administration in 1937. The project contains a total of 9,800 acres.

PURPOSE OF PROJECT: The project is intended to relocate low-income and destitute tenant farms on small farms, and to give them a chance to supplement their farm income by wages earned in a hosiery mill established in the community.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: One hundred and ninety-five farm units have been completed, of which 164 are now occupied. The average farm at Penderlea consists of 28 acres. Farms are grouped around a community center. Every farm has a dwelling, a chicken house with fenced-in run, a barn, poultry house, smokehouse, sanitary privy, and a movable hog house and pump house. All dwellings are white with green roof and blinds. The homes are one-story four, five, and six-room dwellings of frame-dropsiding construction. They are mounted on brick tiers with roofs of creosoted cedar shingles, ceilings of celotex, walls of six to eight-inch tongue and grooved pine board, and floors of scraped and oiled pine. Most of the houses have bathroom, built-in cabinets in the kitchen, a sewerage system consisting of septic tank and drain field, a water system consisting of pump house, well, electric pump, and pressure tank, a hot water tank, fireplace, and screened-in work porch.

Flowers, shrubbery, and close-clipped lawns make the simple homes attractive. Each home is located on a road leading to the community center.

One of the finest rural schools in North Carolina stands at the south end of the horseshoe-shaped center. It is flanked on the east by the auditorium, the teacherage, administration building, educational shops, and the vegetable packing shed. On the west is the gymnasium, economics and social building, cooperative store, and potato storage house.

HOMESTEADERS: Most of the families are low-income but industrious farm tenants, farm laborers, and sharecroppers from the immediate area. Provision is made for every family to have a garden, at least one brood sow, and a milk cow. For home use, each farm has fruit trees to furnish a family supply of fruit from May to September. Each farm has enough corn and hay storage to take care of feed needs.

Cash income is derived from the growing of tobacco, sweet potatoes, strawberries, bulbs, figs, cucumbers, and many other truck crops, as well as from employment in the hosiery mill.

Penderlea Homesteads

This project was initiated to enable low-income tenant and sharecropper families in this eastern seaboard area to become self-sufficient in a combination agrico-industrial community. Penderlea embraces 193 farm units averaging about 20 acres each which spread out in all directions from the community center. Near the community center stands a new, modern hosiery mill owned (with the help of a government loan) by an association of the homesteaders, and operated by a large private hosiery manufacturer.

All farms on Penderlea are individually operated, but the homesteaders have cooperative associations through which they carry on a good deal of their buying and selling, operate their community government, and control their hosiery mill enterprise. The project boasts one of the most complete community centers in the South. Flanking a horseshoe court in the heart of the project are a fine, new school building, an administration building, a gymnasium, a teacherage, a large auditorium, educational buildings, a social center, a cooperative store (operated by the homesteaders association), a potato storage house and a vegetable packing shed.

Penderlea lends itself easily to inspection. The community buildings are close together and visitors can see a number of community activities taking place in some part of the community center at any time. The farm units are small and can easily be paced, giving an exceptionally interesting close-up of the tobacco culture at this time of the year. The operations of the new hosiery mill are likewise very interesting.

Penderlea Homesteads is located in Pender County, eight miles north of Burgaw, in the southeastern part of the state.

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